

VDH General Recommendations for Businesses and other Establishments

Maintaining a Healthy Facility and Preventing COVID-19

Last Updated: May 27, 2021

Effective May 28, 2021, the following public health recommendations apply to general business (non-healthcare) settings in Virginia. For more detailed guidance on specific sectors (such as schools, sports, camps, pools, etc), please see the [VDH Website for Schools, Workplaces, and Communities](#) and also [CDC guidance](#).

Encourage vaccination. Encourage all employees and patrons to get vaccinated for COVID-19 by going to [Vaccinate.Virginia.gov](https://vaccinate.virginia.gov) or calling 1-877-VAX-IN-VA. Where feasible, consider paid time off or other incentives to allow employees to attend vaccination appointments.

Establish policies for mask wearing. Establish a mask wearing policy for employees and patrons that is, at a minimum, at least as protective as [CDC guidelines](#). CDC and VDH currently recommend that all unvaccinated and partially vaccinated individuals, aged 2 or older, wear a mask in public settings and when around people outside of their household. There are some settings where masks are still required by law, regardless of vaccination status. See [VDH's mask page](#) for the most current information on state and federal mask requirements, including mask requirements for schools and public transit. A business may choose to adopt a universal mask policy that is more stringent than [CDC guidance](#) (e.g., by requiring masks for all persons over age 2, regardless of vaccination status). Businesses and venues should consider having a universal masking policy when a large percentage of unvaccinated individuals (e.g., children) are regularly in a facility, or when [local transmission levels](#) of COVID-19 are substantial or high. Use entry-point signage and other means to clearly communicate the mask policy, and have staff available to explain the establishment's mask policy as questions arise. Fully vaccinated individuals should always be permitted to wear a mask, if they choose to do so.

Establish policies and practices for physical distance. In most settings, unvaccinated individuals should continue to stay at least 6 ft apart from people outside their household. Unvaccinated individuals not living in the same household should still have the ability to distance themselves from other unvaccinated people in an establishment or venue. Businesses may have physical engineering systems in place to maintain at least 6 ft of distancing (through signage, floor markers, etc) throughout the establishment, but especially in locations where unvaccinated and vaccinated people may be co-located (such as entrances, congregation points, seating areas, check-out lines, and employee common areas). A more stringent distancing policy for the entire facility may be appropriate when a large percentage of unvaccinated individuals (e.g., children) are regularly in a facility, or when [local transmission levels](#) of COVID-19 are substantial or high.

Promote frequent hand washing. Promote frequent and thorough hand washing by providing employees and patrons entering into the space with a place to wash their hands. If soap and

running water are not immediately available, provide hand sanitizers for customers and staff throughout the place of business, particularly at entry and exit points. Further hand hygiene guidance can be found on the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/videos.html). A CDC training video is available here: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/videos.html>. Additional requirements for employees and employers can be found in the Department of Labor and Industry's [Final Permanent Standard for Infectious Disease Prevention of the SARS- CoV-2 Virus that Causes COVID-19](#).

Practice routine cleaning (and disinfect if needed). Follow [CDC guidance](#) for cleaning and disinfecting the facility or space. Surfaces frequently touched by multiple people, such as door handles, desks, phones, light switches, and faucets, should be cleaned at least once per day. Consider using an [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) to disinfect (in addition to cleaning) when [local transmission levels](#) are substantial or high, when people are not regularly washing hands, or if the space is used by [people at increased risk of severe COVID-19](#). In those situations, disinfecting wipes could be used at least once per day. If patrons wish to wipe down surfaces more often, wipes should be made available to them. If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 in the facility within the last 24 hours, high touch areas should be disinfected, in addition to cleaning the space. Ensure cleaning staff are trained on proper use of cleaning and disinfecting products available in the facility. VDH and CDC do not recommend foggers for disinfection of COVID-19, since there is insufficient evidence to support their use in businesses, their potential benefits do not outweigh potential harms, and conventional cleaning and disinfection methods are safer and proven effective.

Conduct symptom screening of employees. Even if fully vaccinated, employers should encourage employees to self-monitor their symptoms using the questions provided in the [VDH Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Daily Screening of Employees](#) before reporting to work. For employers with established occupational health programs, employers can consider measuring temperature and assessing symptoms of employees prior to starting work/before each shift.

Develop or adopt flexible sick leave policies to ensure that sick employees do not report to work if they have symptoms, if they have a positive COVID-19 test, if they're unvaccinated and need to self-quarantine due to exposure, or if they need to care for a sick family member. Encourage all employees, even if fully vaccinated, to get tested if experiencing [COVID-19 symptoms](#).

Some employees are at [higher risk for severe illness](#) from COVID-19. Employers should take particular care to reduce their risk of exposure, while making sure to be compliant with relevant Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) regulations. Consider offering vulnerable employees duties that minimize their contact with customers and other employees, if agreed to by the employee. Protect employees at [higher risk for severe illness](#) by supporting and encouraging options to telework. Other information on civil rights protections for workers related to COVID- 19 is available [here](#).

Incorporate ventilation as a mitigation strategy. Proper ventilation practices and interventions can reduce the airborne concentrations of COVID-19 inside a building. See [VDH Ventilation Best Practices](#) and [CDC guidance](#) for more information on using ventilation as a strategy to help reduce COVID-19 transmission in buildings.